2011 – 2012 District/Community Literacy Plan

Implementation Report
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"To build vibrant and resilient communities by leveraging literacy
and learning opportunities"

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INTRODUCTION

The Greater Victoria School District and its community partners enjoy a respectful and highly interactive relationship. The District Community Literacy Plan serves as a wonderful example of how when various groups come together for a common cause and higher purpose, positive outcomes occur. We are pleased with the progress made to date.

DISTRICT CONTEXT

Demographic Data

The Greater Victoria School District serves students from the municipalities of Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal, Oak Bay, the Highlands, the City of Victoria, and the following Nations and Aboriginal organizations: Esquimalt Nation; Songhees Nation; Métis Community Services; Métis Nation of Greater Victoria; Victoria Native Friendship Centre; Indigenous Interagency Team; Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Service; and Hulitan Social Services Society.   Schools draw from urban, semi-urban, and suburban areas. Five MLAs represent the Greater Victoria area. As of July 2011, BC Stats reports a total of 102,613 private households in the Greater Victoria School District with approximately 223,488 people residing within the School District.

Students come from diverse socio-economic levels with 23 schools qualifying for CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) funding.   Of the families living in the Greater Victoria School District, 18% are considered to be low income.

Enrolment 2011-2012
We enrolled:
- 8060 FTE Kindergarten through Grade 5 students
- 3840 FTE Grade 6 through Grade 8 students
- 6534 FTE Grade 9 through Grade 12 students
- 78 FTE Adult Students

Included in the above enrolment are the following students:
- 1441 Aboriginal ancestry students
- 743 International students
- 12 Home-school students
- 610 Students registered in Distributed Learning Programs
- 1556 Students with English as a Second Language or English as a Second Dialect
- 3135 Early French Immersion students
- 170 Late French Immersion students
- 2060 Students designated for Special Education Services

DISTRICT COMMUNITY LITERACY PLAN

History 2006 - 2012

In **2006**, Camosun College hosted a forum of literacy educators, service agencies, school districts, and temporary regional literacy coordinators to discuss regional literacy needs on south Vancouver Island. A subgroup met to identify gaps and priorities and became the Regional Literacy Advisory group (RLAG).

In **2007**, British Columbia School Districts were mandated by the Ministry of Education to create a community literacy plan that would be revised and submitted on an annual basis in July of each year. The Ministry of Education provided a Vancouver Island School District orientation to the new district literacy planning process where Island School Districts and Regional Literacy Coordinators discussed beginning plans for community collaboration. Twelve draft district literacy plans were submitted to the Ministry of Education and were available as a resource to other school districts. The Greater Victoria School District received $10,000 in provincial funding to create a Community District Literacy Plan.

In **2008**, an orientation to the literacy planning guidelines was provided to all provincial school districts. Districts were encouraged to proceed at a pace set by the community. The Greater Victoria School District met with RLAG to discuss potential processes for developing the District Community Literacy Plan. A successful funding application for $20,000 was submitted by the RLC (Regional Literacy Committee.) This request was submitted by Literacy Victoria as steward of the funds. The RLC held several roundtable meetings, the primary purpose of which was to inform the community about this regional planning initiative and request participation on the Steering Committee and/or availability for tasks and resources for the initiative. Subsequently a Community Literacy Planning Steering Committee was formed and terms of a literacy coordinator contract complete with deliverables and timelines was completed. The deliverables included a review of the literacy planning process and the development of templates that would lead to the creation of a community profile and an asset/inventory data source list. By July 2008 the community profiles for Victoria, Esquimalt, View Royal and Oak Bay were completed. Between September and December of that same year the community engagement process was implemented. This involved Focus group meetings, individual consultations and community forums. A report on the findings incorporating all data was submitted for consideration to the RLC.

In **2009/2010**, the aforementioned report was edited, and submitted to Legacies Now. $30,000 funding was secured to hire a Literacy Outreach Coordinator and an additional $40,000 funding intended to support the goals of the District Community Literacy Plan was confirmed. With active input from the Task Group and the Management Group goals were then prioritized for action. Goals were as follows:
1. Provide support for Persons with Disabilities.
2. Literacy Support for vulnerable populations, which include those living in poverty, those involved with the justice system, those with mental health issues, women in shelters, those who are homeless.
3. Support for youth (15-18 years) who have dropped out of school or youth (19-24) who are out of school with a high school diploma but are not working or involved in continuing education.
4. Create a website for literacy programs and services in the School District #61 area.

In **2010,** the following projects were funded for 2010-11:
  a) Victoria Disability Resource Centre: Scribe Services – Goal 1
  b) Together Against Poverty Society: Tenancy Advocacy Project – Goal 2
  c) Literacy Victoria: Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (VIRCC) Literacy Pilot Project - Goal 2
  d) Victoria READ Society with Boys and Girls Club: Building Learning Bridges - Goal 3

In **2011,** the following projects were funded for 2011-12**:**
  a) Victoria Disability Resource Centre: Scribe Services - Goal 1
  b) Together Against Poverty Society: Tenancy Advocacy Project - Goal 2
  c) Literacy Victoria: Digital Literacy Resources Project - Goal 2
  d) Victoria READ Society: Building Learning Bridges - Goal 3
  e) Centre for Youth and Society: "Now What": Literacy and Youth in Custody project - Goal 3

In 2011, the Literacy Task Group received $40,000 from 2010 Legacies Now for Year 2 of the Community Literacy Plan Implementation, as well as $35,000 for the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) position. Also in 2011, Literacy BC and 2010 Legacies Now merged to become 'Decoda Literacy Solutions', whose mission is "to build vibrant and resilient communities by leveraging literacy and learning opportunities".

In 2012, the Task Group received $40,000 for Year 3 implementation, as well as $30,000 for LOC position funding.   Five literacy projects were funded and implemented in 2011-2012. In 2012, five new projects received funding for literacy projects in 2012-13. Project descriptions are in this report.

The Task Group meets quarterly and is open to new members for 2012-13.

The project website is www.learnnowvictoria.com.

Community Context

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development?

Input from Task Group Organizations and LOC:
1. In the past year there have been funding cuts from the Ministry of Community and Family Development and the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. The focus in funding shifted from intervention to prevention and this includes aboriginal services.

2. These cuts result in reduced social supports and family services. There are greater numbers of people with mental health and other social issues coming to agencies and increasing the burden on their staff and services. There is a greater need for counselors, including for clients dealing with trauma. Agencies are having to provide trauma training for staff, as there are no other supports.

3. Since there is no social safety net for disenfranchised youth, there is need for greater outreach to youth. There is an increase in social issues children bring to school.

4. The closure of Community Access Program (CAP) sites is a great loss to citizens who need access to computers. This change results in greater numbers of people coming to agencies, who would have previously used CAP sites.

5. The Greater Victoria Public Library has noticed a significant decline in challenging behavior and incidents in the branches (including the Central Library) as well as in the amount of non-library-related social services needed. This in part is attributed to the growing success of long-term solutions to the issues surrounding homelessness, such as the Housing First initiative (and its attendant services) and the continuing expansion of hours and service at Our Place.

6. At this time, many Task Group members see provincial reemployment initiatives to have a greater funding focus than adult literacy initiatives.

7. Non-profits see a high staff turnover in non-profits and wages as a factor.

8. Agencies have had to be more innovative and creative and collaborations have increased.

9. The Task Group and LOC having face to face interactions has built relationships and resulted in more meaningful referrals.

Task Group

A. Who takes part in the Task Group?
The Task Group has the following organizations as active participants:
- Greater Victoria School District #61-(SD61)
- The Victoria READ Society
- Greater Victoria Public Library- (GVPL)
- Literacy Victoria- (LV)
- The Victoria Disability Resource Centre - (DRC)
- Together Against Poverty Society - (TAPS)
- The BC Schizophrenia Society - (BCSS)
- The Learning Disabilities Association - (LDA)
- Camosun College
- Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society - (VEPS)
- Capital Mental Health Association - (CMHA)
- Centre for Youth and Society

B. How is the work of this group organized?
The Task Group (TG):
- Operates within the Terms of Reference developed by the LOC and TG members
- Is open to community members and includes representatives from the social services and education sector
- Works with the LOC to identify and respond to gaps in literacy services and resources
- Makes decisions by consensus
- Determines the best use of implementation funding

- Membership, meetings, consultations and activities are organized by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC)
- Meets on a quarterly basis, unless extra meetings are required
- Has the LOC as their the primary contact person

See Appendix A: Victoria Literacy Task Group Terms of Reference

Community Development and Literacy Collaboration

A. What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the Task Group? What are the essential ongoing collaborations?
- Literacy Victoria has corporate partnerships with The Fairmont Empress Hotel, Ministry of Tourism, Thrifty Foods and the Shipyards for workplace essential skills project
- LV is partnered with the aboriginal community, developing community learning plans
- LV is partnered with non-profits – Sandy Merriman House, Rock Bay Landing and Camus Gardens
- LV and the Community Access Program
- TG indicated that new partnerships are emerging from former ones
- READ Society is partnered with SD 61, 62 & 63, Vancouver Island Refugee Centre Society, Aboriginal Learners, Victoria Native Friendship Centre
- READ is partnered with small micro businesses - MyChosin' Cafe and Sitka
- Task Group members have shared information, resources and referrals
- TG worked together to make the best decisions for allocation of implementation funding
- TG organizations have partnerships for their funded projects
- The Disability Resource Centre & Together Against Poverty Society presentation on 'Persons With Disabilities' policies and benefits to the TG and staff partnered to meet learning needs
- Centre for Youth & Society and probation services & University of Victoria students
- Greater Victoria School District #61 is partnered with: Victoria READ Society; Success by 6; 1000x5; Strong Start Centres; Saanich Neighborhood House; Greater Victoria Public Libraries; Raise-A-Reader; Post Media CanWest Spell-a-thon; Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society.

B. What makes collaborations work well?
- Clear agreed upon Terms of Reference
- Highly organized process for meetings and follow-up activities (i.e. minutes)
- A genuine interest in the project and availability to participate at an effective level
- Members understand what is expected of them and how they can expect to benefit from participation
- Focus on the best decisions for the community and not letting personal work agendas interfere with the process
- Existing and potentially new members are well informed on the background and work of the project
- Creates realistic goals
- Members display mutual respect, understanding and trust
- People at all organizational level are encouraged to participate
- Flexibility and adaptability to factors that influence the progress of a project and TG membership

A. What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

The Task Group agreed to continue in 2011-12 with a focus on activities and initiatives that address the link between poverty and literacy issues:

- Increasing community awareness of literacy issues, programs and services
- Support agencies working with vulnerable populations (adults with low literacy, persons with disabilities, low income families)
- Identify and respond to issues and gaps in literacy programs and services
- Direct funding to agencies addressing priority needs

Overall Framework:

1. Increase links with community organizations and groups.
   - √ identified issues and gaps in services
   - √ identified potential partnerships for programs, including potential funding
   - √ facilitated resource sharing
   - √ promoted literacy programs and services

2. Develop and deliver information, including presentations, to organizations, networks and groups.
   - √ delivered 'Literacy 101' presentation to organizations, which included information on:
     - √ literacy and related issues
     - √ how to identify and respond to client literacy issues
     - √ where to refer clients for literacy support
     - √ introduction to Health Literacy
     - √ introduction Financial Literacy
     - √ plain language
     - √ literacy resources

3. Support fundraising efforts of organizations offering literacy programs and support services.
   - √ researched funding sources, including local corporations and new technology tools (including social media)
   - √ disseminated information on funding opportunities and offered grant writing support
   - √ participated in fundraising networking events

4. Shaw TV-The Daily: Follow-up to segment on Family Literacy Day in January 2011 with feature stories on literacy and programs and services.
   - √ received support to promote literacy events i.e. Adult Literacy Week and Money Matters Financial Literacy workshops - to be continued in 2012

5. Broaden the development and marketing of LNV website.
   - √ created and widely distributed website bookmarks
   - √ consulted with organizations regarding adding & updating program and service listings
   - √ sought a volunteer to assist with website technology (in-progress)

6. Times Colonist: Request promotion of literacy issues, programs and services, using and promoting plain language.
   √ 2 feature stories on Family Literacy
   √ promoted community programs and services
   √ promoted website

7. Use Social Media to reach all populations with information on programs and services.
   √ promoted programs, services, events, news and resources via Facebook and Twitter

8. Assist organizations offering literacy programs and services to increase their volunteer base, if required. (There may be greater need in the 2012-13 project period.)
   √ promoted volunteer opportunities via social media

9. Create a brochure on literacy programs and services.
   √ TG decided to produce a bookmark instead of a brochure to list services
   √ included www.learnnowvictoria.com website information
   √ create an online downloadable version-

In addition to implementing the above priorities, the LOC manages a broad range of literacy plan activities including budget management, planning and coordination including:
- Day to day administration
- Meeting with many service providers and groups to promote project, services, programs and identify gaps in service
- Meetings with LOC's in Saanich, Sooke and Westshore
- Island meeting of LOC's and Decoda Literacy Solutions
- Professional development via webinars; information to Task Group
- Research on health and financial Literacy programs and resources
- Promotion of literacy related events via email & PR,
- Maintained social media tools: (Facebook & Twitter)
- Research on literacy marketing tools used by national organizations
- PR promotion of literacy related events
- Shared coordination of ABC Life Literacy Money matters pilot program
- Grant writing workshops

Funded Projects addressed specific goals related to the literacy plan:

Victoria Disability Resource Centre (DRC)
   Project Title: Scribe Services
   Project Goals/Objectives:
- Continue to provide SCRIBE Services by recruiting and training volunteers to work with the individuals we serve to apply for PWD status
- Expand these services to include other kinds of applications that will enable individuals to access other types of disability benefits and resources (Housing, Disability Tax Credits, Registered Disability Savings Plans, and CPP-Disability)

- Make various types of assistive technology and adaptive software that can assist people with limited literacy abilities, available for demonstration and training purposes

Centre for Youth & Society (CYS)
Project Title: "Now What": Literacy and Youth in Custody project.
Project Goals/Objectives:
- Engage youth in custody in learning and develop a creative way to deliver information on transition and support upon their release
- Creation of a brief graphic novel containing accessible information on probation orders and release plans that youth need to understand in order to transition successfully out of custody
- Develop literacy, legal literacy and transition skills simultaneously

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS)
Project Title: Tenancy Advocacy Project
Project Goals/Objectives:
- Legal Advocates provide sensitive and empowering assistance for individuals who experience literacy challenges, to support them in interpreting and understanding legal processes and terminology
- Increase the number of public education workshops to tenants about their rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancy Act, in order to foster community literacy and empowerment for individuals and families who face multiple barriers
- Provide interpreters to assist in providing effective services to clients, when necessary

Literacy Victoria
Project Title: Digital Literacy Resources
Project Goals/Objectives:
- Develop an online resource to assist those with low literacy skills to access tools appropriate to their skill level
- Identify basic skill levels in reading, writing, spelling and math within Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Provincial Benchmark Assessment
- Tailor the online resource for use in Community Access Program (CAP) Computer Labs and social service agencies, as well as for LV learners and tutors
- Create a collection of printable resources and links to websites with online literacy tools

Victoria READ Society
Project Title: Building Learning Bridges, Year 2
Project Goals/Objectives
- Build literacy/numeracy identification and early-intervention capacity amongst front-line workers and families supporting youth in need and referred through the justice system
- Provide youth-focused literacy/numeracy awareness and early intervention training to additional Boys and Girls Club staff, to staff at Threshold Housing Society and to volunteers from both agencies
- Provide direct literacy/numeracy remedial support services to youth program participants from the Boys and Girls Club and Threshold Housing Society

Greater Victoria School District #61 Collaborations – not funded by Implementation Funds

Noisy Readers Club

In 2008 - 2009, READ and the Greater Victoria School District planned a pilot project for supporting at risk primary students in literacy. The objective for this initiative was to serve more children struggling with foundation skills who come from low-income households. The pilot project, known as Noisy Readers Club, was implemented in 2011 – 2012 at one after school location in School District #61. In a creative, active learning environment, this program blended a remediation program using familiar reading, new reading, word study with readers' theatre, educational games and parent workshops. The invitation was to families whose children could benefit from extra literacy support and who would enjoy being part of something special. Target students were vulnerable students in Grades 2/3 who are not meeting or minimally meeting expectations in reading. School staffs identified groups of six target children who would work well together. They met two times per week in 12 week sessions. Parents were provided with half-hour workshops while volunteers played games with students (i.e. How to Read With Your Child) and families were invited to two after-session dinners to celebrate the success of students.

Digital Storytelling with At Risk Youth

Working with a School District #61 school, a group of six youth were identified as being at risk in the area of literacy. Working with a videographer, students learned how to express their ideas regarding their written responses to reading in a story board and digital format. This project extended to a three month project to allow students time to complete their iMovie.

Success by 6

The Greater Victoria School District has had school district representatives including district principals and trustees working with Success by 6 since its inception in 2004. In 2010 - 2011, School District #61 worked with Success by 6 to implement the 1000x5 Children's Book Recycling Project. In October, 2011 the Board of Education passed a motion to continue "to be an active partner with Success by 6 and PLAY (Partnership, Learning and Advocacy for Young Children) and their initiatives in the development of literacy of infants and preschoolers." Success by 6 honoured the district's Strong Start Centers by recognizing their contribution to parents in the community during their Early Years Awards in April, 2012.

1000x5 Children's Book Recycling Project

Success by 6 funds the '1000x5 Children's Book Recycling' Project coordinated in cooperation with the Greater Victoria School District and Saanich Neighbourhood Place. The project is based on the belief that if a child hears 1000 books by age 5, he or she is much better prepared to enjoy and succeed in learning. In October, 2011, the Greater Victoria Board of Education passed a motion asking each school to participate in the '1000x5 Book Recycling Project', inviting parents to donate gently used books for babies and preschoolers. Greater Victoria School District provided venues in schools for the collection of books donated by district families, and space in a school for community volunteers to sort the books according to age groups. The books were distributed to children 0-5 years who attend the district's six Strong Start Centers and other community agencies. Many of these children had limited or no books in their homes. This program increased early literacy opportunities each month for over 750 children. Each child may receive up to 30 books per year for his or her home library. In the first year, the program donated 10,000 books at an estimated value of $100,000.00 for children to take home and keep for their home libraries. The goal of the project is to donate $1,000,000 in books in five years.

Postmedia Raise-a-Reader
The Greater Victoria School District promotes Postmedia Raise-a-Reader grants by distributing application information to all schools. In total, forty-seven District #61 schools received Postmedia Raise-a-Reader grants to promote literacy initiatives in schools. The Greater Victoria School District also distributed information to schools regarding the Postmedia CanWest Spelling Bee. Three out of four top finalists in the Vancouver Island spelling bee were from School District #61. District #61 honoured their top finalists at the March, 2012 Ed Policy meeting by holding an informal spelling bee with students and trustees.

B. **What actions were taken to reach these?**
See Goals and Actions for 2011-2012 (pages 8 -13) and Indications of Success (pages 14 -18)

Additional actions:
- The Task Group & LOC worked on priorities at quarterly meetings, and additional meetings as required;
- 5 organizations implemented funded literacy projects;
- Initial project evaluations completed including: Literacy Victoria and The READ Society, Disability Resource Centre, Together Against Poverty Society;
- New project funding allocated to 5 agencies.

C. **What organizations or group participated in these actions?**
- Greater Victoria School District #61
- The READ Society
- Literacy Victoria
- The Victoria Disability Resource Centre
- Together Against Poverty Society
- The Learning Disabilities Association
- Camosun College
- Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society
- Capital Mental Health Association
- Centre for Youth and Society
- The Victoria Foundation
- Vancouver Island Literacy Outreach Coordinators
- 2010 Legacies Now staff
- website consultant
- marketing consultant
- ABC Literacy Canada
- Other agencies who submitted listings to www.learnnowvictoria.com website

D. **What adjustments were made to the plan?**
Decided to create a website bookmark rather than a brochure.

E. **As the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?**
No.

Indications of Success

A. How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impacts.

Feedback from LOC and Task Group:

Literacy Victoria:
The funding was used to hire a staff person to:
- identify adult appropriate online literacy resources, exercises and worksheets;
- categorize these resources into a variety of skill appropriate levels;
- develop 'Skills Check' activities to help learners determine which resources would be best suited for their skill level;
- work with website designer to create the online "Skills Check" and learner resource page that is user friendly and appropriate for lower literacy learners;
- visit Community Access Program (CAP) sites in the city to inform them of this new resource.

Resource availability is a key issue for our learners and tutors. The development of an Online Resource Centre that was initiated by the Implementation Projects funding laid the foundation for additional funding from both Raise a Reader and the United Way to further develop Literacy Victoria resources for tutors and learners both online and paper-based.   Although the Online Resource Centre is in the early stage, LV staff believe it will develop and evolve in response to learners and tutors needs and feedback, and provide an important resource to literacy learners both locally and around the world for years to come.

Providing resources and support for learners and tutors is critical to the quality of service provided and the sustainability of the program. The Implementation Funding allowed Literacy Victoria to both initiate the development of an Online Resource Centre and to seek funding to further develop this resource.

READ Society
South Island Training Institute Workshop: READ staff presented a shortened version of the Building Learning Bridges workshop to 8 social workers, adult educators and employment assistance workers from across the South Island. Case loads varied depending upon location and specific roles and responsibilities. Based on input from participants, it appears that the smallest number of youth served was 10-15. Using this information we have assumed that aspects of this workshop reached upwards of 80 clients. Workshop dialogue and feedback indicated that assessment and tools content were new and useful; youth-friendly websites with learning resources were new, and Orca Soundings and Currents series books were a new resource for some participants. Following the workshop, the READ facilitator fielded email and phone follow-up inquiries about the workshop content and the resources. The materials from the workshop were made available to all SITI conference participants. The approximate number was over 150 professionals from across Southern Vancouver Island. Community-based funding enhanced the granting process for two programs.

Noisy Kids Reading Club
The program focuses on children in grades 2/3 who are not meeting or minimally meeting expectations and who are from low-income households. In a creative, active learning environment this program blends a remediation program using familiar reading, new reading, word study with readers' theatre, educational games and parent workshops. Club members receive extra literacy support by participating in this multi-

layered program. Families are invited to attend an opening dinner, a family games night and a final production of the readers' theatre script.

Impact Story
Learning to read with confidence builds confidence for life. At the first family dinner in March, 2012, one parent commented that her daughter was usually quiet and shy around lots of people. The parent couldn't believe how involved she was with all of the different families and children. The parent said, "She is a totally different person in how she carries herself, her voice, how she is able to speak in front of people – she would never have been able to do this before." Parents, school principals and teachers told us about the difference this program has made to the students. The differences they talked about were reflected in the students' willingness to read, in their grades, in their self-confidence, and in their participation at school.

Capturing stories-Expanding Knowledge
This new program uses digital story telling as an entry point to enhance literacy/numeracy skills and engagement for youth at risk. Currently, Capturing Stories targets Aboriginal youth in grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 who could benefit from different approaches to writing and reading. The program blends film and acting experience with cultural knowledge and the desire to connect Aboriginal communities and families with the learning process. By first exploring their own stories, students discover their strengths, how they think, and how they can work best together as a film crew. Some of the work in this program includes: identifying the heart of the story; learning about camera operation/ audio and lighting techniques; scouting locations; interviewing, and using the movie map to organize footage. These experiences are supported by professional guest speakers and mentors in the areas of photography, lighting techniques and audio selection. Participants also receive additional support related to all elements of reading and writing during the program.

Impact Story
Students showcase their stories for families and community members. This program will not be completed until late June, 2012. Stories in development include interviews with heroes students have identified, some of their elders, Aboriginal business owners, band leaders, band council representatives, parents and teachers.

Disability Resource Centre
This funding was used to help consumers with limited literacy skills fill out and understand forms and applications for various funding and programs such as Provincial and Federal Disability Benefits, Disability Tax Credits, Transportation, Housing, Employment, and Registered Disability Savings Plan.
This funding has a huge impact on this program. People with limited literacy skills tend to shy away from programs in the community that can benefit them due to being overwhelmed by the amount of written information provided as well as expected from them to participate. This program allows multiple staff members and volunteers at the VDRC to work with many different consumers who want to participate in these programs. We are not only able to assist in the filling out of paperwork, but also help with explaining the programs and supports to the consumer as well. We now live in a world where information about programs and services is no longer found face to face or over the phone, but is all found on the internet. This format makes accessing information easier than ever, however for people with limited literacy this is an extremely difficult way to receive and understand information. Luckily we are able to provide these individuals with the one on one support and guidance they require to be able to access this information, and in turn participate fully in their community.

Impact Story

Mr. "John Doe" came to Victoria and had been staying at homeless shelters, as well as on the streets for more than 5 months. He originally came into the VDRC to ask about food resources in the community. I wrote down the various agencies and organizations that provided food for him; when I passed him a piece of paper, I could tell by the look on his face that he was very unsure about what I was handing him. I had a feeling that this person is not able to read what I wrote down for him. To approach this, I asked him if he would like me to print off a map of how to get to these places, as well as pictures of the buildings so he would know what they look like. I could tell that he was relieved that I asked this, and he responded that a map and picture would help him a lot. After speaking with him, I found out that the reason this person was living on the streets and in shelters is because he was not able to apply for housing. It's not that this man did not qualify for housing, or that he made too much money, but he was actually not able to physically fill out or read his housing application. He had been to other organizations before and inquired about this, and he said he had received the same information time and time again which was a website address for BC Housing, which he was not even able to log onto the internet, as well as the BC Housing application, which he could not get past the first page of due to his literacy skills. The fact that he was not able to fill out these applications was embarrassing to him, so instead of putting his "pride on the line" he kept the folded up and wrinkled BC Housing application in his backpack, and continued to sleep in shelters and on the streets. I worked with this man and helped him get his BC Housing application filled out and submitted. He is now on the "Top Priority" list for housing. He will now be coming in to see me every 3 months so we can call BC Housing to make sure his housing file is still up to date and active. Even though he is still staying in shelters at the moment while waiting for housing, he at least knows he has taken a step towards getting proper housing, which is great for his self esteem and he also knows that he has discovered a precious resource in the VDRC for any other issues that may come up for him, in which his limited literacy is preventing him from completing. I am now working with this man on additional health supplements he is eligible for on his PWD income, and well as his yearly bus pass. His bus pass application is sent to him every December, and he has never once been able to fill it out and take advantage of the discounted bus pass he so dearly needs. What this man consistently has told me is he wishes that his PWD was able to provide him with a "case manager" that could have been helping his with these issues for the past few years. He used to have a case manager through his PWD, but those services were cut quite a few years ago. This story is just one example of how this program is able to help those who have "slipped thought the cracks". While government programs and supports are consistently declining, we are providing a support that can help those who are being greatly impacted by the cuts in government programs and are the most need. Prior to receiving this funding we only had one staff member that was able to provide this kind of support to the individuals we serve. The funding has enabled us to train both staff and volunteers to ensure that we not only can serve more people and meet the high level of demand, but also have trained people who have the skills to provide this service on an ongoing basis.

Together Against Poverty Society

The funding was used to support TAPS tenant advocacy project, which helps reduce the risk of homelessness in Greater Victoria through working with individuals and families in an effort to ensure that they remain in secure housing. The funding helped provide education, support and referrals for individuals and families who are living in poverty and was also put towards providing public legal education for tenants, professionals and community members regarding tenancy issues, rights and responsibilities.   With the assistance of the Victoria Community Literacy Plan funding, TAPS was able to provide legal information for tenants regarding the BC Residential Tenancy Act and other applicable legislation, information that is not easy to comprehend, especially for those facing literacy challenges. This funding was also used to ensure TAPS tenant advocates were able to continue to offer mediation and negotiation on behalf of clients in an effort to move toward the

equitable resolution of disputes with their landlords and/or property managers as well as provide legal representation for clients at Residential Tenancy Branch dispute resolution hearings. One of the key impacts of receiving funding from the Victoria Community Literacy Fund is the conscious focus on the literacy challenges facing our clients. The connection TAPS has made over the past few years with agencies working on literacy issues in our community has been very important. As an organization we have developed a greater understanding of the literacy challenges facing our clients and our role in ensuring they understand their rights, responsibilities and benefits to which they are entitled under the law. We have learned how to better work with, identify and refer clients who may need assistance due to literacy challenges.

Impact Story
In November 2011, a young single mother of two young children came to TAPS with a '10-day Notice to End for Non-Payment'. She was in a state of panic because, although she understood it was an eviction notice, she was unable to read the 'fine print', which stated that she had 5 days to pay the rent. It became clear almost immediately that this young woman was unable to read and comprehend the notice. Due to the assistance of a TAPS tenant legal advocate, the funding and the awareness brought to TAPS through the Victoria Community Literacy Fund, this young woman was able to fully understand the notice, take the 5 days she was entitled to, find monies for the rent and be referred to a local literacy agency. The funding received from the Victoria Community Literacy Fund contributed significantly to the sustainability to the program. TAPS tenant legal advocacy project is funded through a number of different granting streams and we are constantly working to obtain enough money to properly fund the project. Securing this funding assisted Together Against Poverty Society in fully funding this unique and vital project.

Literacy Outreach Coordinator
The LOC has received very positive feedback about the literacy project from the community at meetings, events and through other communications. People frequently comment that we need to ensure that literacy is included as an important factor in overall service delivery to vulnerable clients, including newcomers. The Literacy 101 presentations were of great interest to participants and resulted in a demonstrated interest in further education on literacy. In particular, the importance of plain language struck a chord with participants and peaked their interest in ensuring that documents are prepared in plain language.

The use of the www.learnnowvictoria.com website has grown. There is a need for ongoing development and promotion of the website, in order to provide as a tool for linking people with resources, as well to promote community literacy programs.

What are the things that support literacy work?
- Sufficient funding and staff to deliver sustainable services
- Availability of people to meet and develop new avenues to address literacy
- New people with different skills and expertise joining Task Groups
- Higher profile of literacy issues at all levels of the community
- Awareness raising that reduces stigma
- Training for staff and volunteers
- The introduction of workplace literacy programs
- Web-based conference calling capacity (including video) to communicate locally, provincially and nationally

Challenges

A. What are the difficulties?
- Lack of sustainable funding
- Most work is done on a project and contract basis
- Need for greater understanding of reality of literacy issues and their impact on economics and quality of life (skills, confidence, employment)
- Stigma remains an issue and needs to be reduced

B. What would help?
- Sustainable funding for staff (not project/contract based)
- Free awareness and promotional materials provided to LOC, Task Groups and literacy agencies (including television, radio and internet)

Plans for 2012 - 2013

A. Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community?
The LOC and Task Group reviewed current gaps and established priority goals for this year.

B.   What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals? What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?
- The LOC will continue to implement the objectives of the priority goals
- Expand Task Group membership, bringing in new voices and expertise
- Invite government staff as guests to Task Group meetings to further develop the relationship between community and government and increase knowledge and resource sharing
- Expanded use social media
- SHAW TV has hosted one episode on family literacy and is interested in further episodes; LOC liaison with SHAW

Requires:
- Realistic framework / timeline for implementation of goals
- Adequate staff time
- Efficient use of funding resources and reduced LOC hours
- Task Group availability to participate in discussions and decision making processes

Funded projects for 2012-2013 (approved in March 2012)
Year 3 Implementation Funding

Organization	Project	Target Group
Literacy Victoria	A 'tutors onsite' pilot project: includes 1-1 tutoring in reading, writing, computers. Partners: • Casual Labour Pool • Inter-Cultural Association • James Bay Community Project • Mustard Seed	Adults with low literacy and in poverty
Together Against Poverty Society	Advocacy for people dealing with wrongful dismissal and self-help kit (and related documents) • ½ day per week of service • promotion of service in community	Non-unionized low wage workers
Capital Mental Health Association	Support for completion of upgrading and education • contribution to Joan Dumca fund • fund currently provides $200 per person	Adults 19-45 with mental health issues
Victoria READ Society	1. Outreach to low income households-literacy and numeracy • onsite at low income housing units 2. Outreach-Victoria: • remedial support for children who are behind in studies/grades	Preschool 0-3 years In school 5-10 years Children in ESL – Grades 2-4
Victoria Disability Resource Centre	• expanded scribing support to Persons With Disabilities clients	PWD clients

Appendix A

Victoria Literacy Task Group
Terms of Reference

1. Interested community members can join the Task Group if they have a vested interest in literacy and learning, with a focus on one of the three literacy plan priority areas and/or on increasing awareness of literacy issues.
   Priority Areas:
   a. Persons with disabilities
   b. Vulnerable populations
   c. Youth 15-29

2. Members attend a minimum of 3 out of 4 quarterly meetings and are available for occasional 1-1 consultations with LOC (meeting / phone / email).

3. Members review materials sent by the Coordinator and respond in the requested timeframe.

4. Scope: Consensus decision-making is understood to be the foundation of the collaborative nature of the Task Group and demonstrates trust in the organizations at the table to make wise decisions. The purpose of this approach (community building) is to support ownership of the project by people investing their time and expertise in it.

The Plan resides within Greater Victoria School District #61 geographically and forms a complementary piece to the School District's Achievement Contract. School District #61 is an active player in the Task Group and communicates its decisions to the Greater Victoria School District #61 Board of Education.

The Task Group:
- Brings expertise to discussions and makes decisions on the literacy plan implementation.
- Has a Management Group which manages the implementation of decisions made in the context of planning, implementation and funding, at the Task Group table; anyone from the Task Group can sit on the Management Group.
- The Management Group has fiscal responsibility.
- Reviews applications for implementation funding and decides on funding allocation; if there is a point of disagreement at the Task Group table, it goes to the Management Group for review and decision making; the Management Group will come back to the Task Group with a decision and rationale for it.
- Provides LOC with referrals to community resources/relevant contacts.
- Supports the LOC in implementation activities, including connecting coordinator to target groups.
- Participates in an evaluation process of the plan implementation.